



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1297MA-1 for Boston Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This application sets forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision based on blended learning, extending learning opportunities, fostering inclusive environments, creating collaborative spaces for learning and using assessments to inform instruction. They support this vision through literature citations and lucid examples of what they want to accomplish. They are focusing this application on middle school reform and they do a good job of describing how many of the ills of high school programs such as dropout rates evolve from problems encountered in middle schools.</p> <p>This section also provides a good capsule description of 4 underlying strategies that will facilitate the necessary reforms: adopting standards and assessments; building data systems; recruiting and developing effective teachers; and turning around the lowest achieving schools. This is another example of planning that is likely to result in a highly effective project.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The fact that all public and charter school programs that include 6-8 grade students will be eligible to participate in Boston 365 is a definite plus. The schools will be selected in the first 100 days.</p> <p>While this is not as cost-effective as actually selecting the schools and describing them in developing the application itself, the application redeems itself by providing a full description of the demographics of each eligible school in the Performance Measures section of the application. These data will allow the school selection process to be highly purposive and should assure that the adequate numbers of students from low-income families will be selected.</p> <p>While this plan is effective in that the school populations are described in time to select the schools during the first 100 days, considerable time and effort would have been saved by selecting the school in advance of writing the application.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The essence of the strategy set forth in this section is to use the Boston 365 schools as an incubator in which to test a district-wide approach that will follow successful implementation of this project. A significant amount of information that relates to the project serving as a change agent is contained in the A-2 section of the application. These data are contained in the Acceleration Agenda display and include reading, mathematics, high school graduation, etc.</p> <p>No logic model was included in the application, although citations related to theory of change are imbedded throughout the proposal. More than half the pages of the technical section include citations or examples of exemplary practices which can be emulated. My professional opinion is that the innovations are very likely to extend beyond the middle schools participating in the project.</p> <p>The proposal would have been strengthened if there was a discussion of how technologically-trained middle schoolers will fare when they move to the district's high schools.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This section is built around a detailed exhibit which provides an “acceleration agenda” that sets goals for the next 5 years for outcome related to summative assessment results, decreasing gapes, graduation rates and SAT score, and IB/AP participation data. This is a very effective way to present these data.</p> <p>Closing the gap is discussed in the student achievement section which contains several examples such as one related to closing the achievement gaps experienced by English language learners. Two mini-case studies are presented of improving test scores in two low-achieving schools. Graduation data and college enrollment data are addressed their own sections.</p> <p>One point was deducted because because the plans do not include information as to what is likely to happen to these students when they reach high school, in regards to following up on the best features of the middle school program.</p> <p>These data are supported with performance data and projections for the next 5 years from all high-needs groups. This is a highly effective way of presenting these data.</p> <p>I believe these projections to be ambitious by achievable. They also exceed the ESEA goals.</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Through data tables and numerous anecdotal reports of the success of programs at individual school, the application leaves no doubt that the BPS instructional program is on the rise in areas such as test scores, graduation rates and data sharing. The exhibit, Signification Reforms in Persistently Low Performing Schools, is an example of the progress the district has made. Student learning outcomes and achieving ambitious, significant reforms are also addressed in section A-4, as well as in this section. This section also includes several detailed sections about making student data available for educators and school leaders, and for students and families; and they give two "examples of success" involved in using public data and assessment dashboards to gain community and parent support.</p> <p>One example was given was at the Clarence. R. Edwards Middle School which was one of the lowest performing schools in the city and was failing. The following strategies turned the school around: a data-driven approach to instruction; "academic leagues" that provided 4 additional hours of academic support per student; teachers having more collaborative time to meet with grade-level teams and community partners; and a complement of enrichment programs and community partnerships to change school engagement, culture and family engagement.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Data transparency, especially in regards to salaries, programs and weighted enrollments is made public annually through Freedom of Information requests filed by Boston newspapers and printed annually at the Boston Globe and Boston Herald websites. This is an excellent way of assuring transparency in the most critical areas in cities that tend to be highly politicized. Boston, New York and Los Angeles are examples where this strategy is frequently employed. It is assumed, based on similar programs in other urban LEAs, that these data include personnel salaries and assignments for both teachers and other kinds of instructional personnel, and noteworthy non-personnel expenditures at the school level.</p> <p>Examples of the benefits accruing from making more transparent student learning objectives, and student attainment data relating to learning objectives, is discussed and several examples are given. One of them relates to school choice and it ensures that all data used to design alternative public placements is published in the district's website.</p>		

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Legislation and participation in State-level Race to the Top Program help ensure that BPS has the autonomy it needs to custom tailor the Boston 356 to the district's unique needs and conditions.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Legislation and participation in the State-level Race to the Top Program help ensure that BPS has the autonomy it needs to custom tailor the Boston 365 to the district's unique needs and conditions. The application gives several examples of stakeholders' involvement with the proposal, including three principals serving on the design team. Letters of support from stakeholders -- some of national stature -- are included with the application.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The subheading, "Analysis of needs and gaps," appears to be inadvertently labeled "Letters of Support From Key Stakeholders" in the application provides a chronology of events and plans for implementing all key aspects of the application. Critical subcomponents are described in sufficient detail to give the reader a good example of what has been done and is being planned for each major component of the plan.</p> <p>The section also includes a matrix that presents a multiyear history of the districts' strategies for instructional strategies aimed at enhancing personalized learning for students. It also contain additional discussions and another matrix of building personallized learning for students through blended learning strategies withboth sections and paragraphs that describe how this was done at all grade levels.</p> <p>Some of the matrices identify weaknesses in the moddle school program and summarize strategies the were employed to meet these needs.</p> <p>The final part of this section includes a discussion for the logic behind the reform proposal.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application provides in this section a detailed and encompassing plan for assuring that students will "master 21st century literacy" and will be able to understand how what they are learning are keys to eventual success in college and the workplace. The section includes a description of the district's "three program approach" to assessment: Assessment of Learning, Assessment for Learning, and Assessment as Learning. This is the slogan used by the district that means first assess the learning that has taken place, then assess the changes that should be made, and then learn from the assessments so as not to make those errors in other settings. It satisfies parts (a) and (b) in the section requirements.</p> <p>Appendix XI has a detailed plan for conducting these activities.</p> <p>The section makes a strong case for going beyond learning from print sources and going into other modalities, especially those related to digital learning solutions and personal experiences. It discusses blended learning in-depth and links the common core standards to blended learning experiences. It links those to meeting graduation requirements through a digital Graduation Tracker tool for students; that helps them meet graduation and college preparation requirement.</p> <p>The section includes a matrix linking common core standard to blended learning opportunities. It also includes seven examples of individualized programs that take advantage of digital learning opportunities ranging from apprenticeships to</p>		

robotics workshops. The application commits the district to incorporating a personalized sequence of content and skill development based on blended learning strategies; and committing itself to accommodating and adapting content at every opportunity. Thus it fully meets the application's requirements for this section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is one of the best-thought out and detailed sections of the proposal. It provides strong evidence that a learning plan that pays particularly close attention to the needs of high-need learners has been developed and will likely succeed in its implementation. The plan embodies a plethora of strategies for students, teachers and administrators – describing them all fully – such as individualized coaching, school-based leadership, and professional teams and communities. It also addresses through a simple schematic the BPS plan for improving practice through feedback from evaluation systems. The evaluation model of "Improving Practice through Feedback from Evaluation Systems" with it accompanying schematic is an example of how the issues raised in (b) and (c) are addressed thoughtfully and thoroughly. The distance learning opportunities are an example of how item (d) is addressed.

It commits itself to personalized learning communities that meet college and graduation requirements and is based on "high quality and rigorous assessments." They go on to say that: "From our extensive experience with school reform we know that successful implementation depends on the knowledge and preparedness of educators and school leaders." The section also includes detailed subsections on personalized learning, instructional coaching, school-based leaders, professional teams and communities, improving practice through feedback from evaluation systems and developing an online clearinghouse of tools and resources.

It goes on to explain in considerable detail how data from instructional systems and data systems will be used to assure that students spend more time with highly effective teachers; and using blending learning time to expand the role of highly effective teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Central office organization that will support this project is both deep and varied. It includes a project director reporting directly to the BPS CIO, a project manager, literacy staff, teacher leaders and technology support specialists – with most of these staff organized into transformation teams. The plan also includes a multi-page grid detailing the innovative features of the plan and a brief statement what each will require from the participating BPS schools and charters. It also includes sections that discuss the plan's abilities to have students demonstrate mastery in various ways and the manners in which students with disabilities and English learners will be accommodated.</p> <p>The section includes an organization plan that meets requirement (a); a detailed description of how school-level flexibility will be assured which meets the requirements for part (b); a section on opportunities to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery which meets the requirements for part (c); options for demonstrating mastery at multiple time and in multiple ways that meets the requirements for part (d); and a section on providing adaptable and access able learning systems for disabled students and English learners which addresses part (e). All the requirements of this section are fully met in a thoughtful and innovative fashion.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

The centerpiece of the school infrastructure plan is equipping all students in the participating schools with wireless-ready mobile devices; training teachers in their use and utilization; and creating applications that will permit parents to monitor their students' progress more effectively. This will be accomplished through expansion of ongoing programs such as Technology Goes Home and Parent University.

A very unique and gratifying feature of the infrastructure plan is establishing student-run technology support programs which trains students to do most of the support that the technology programs will need to provide. This feature, adopted from the dissemination strategies of leading colleges and universities, will permit highly effective support to rendered a very modest cost (presumably the students will be able to be paid through federal work-study funds which cost the district about \$8 an hour; as well as provide students with highly marketable skills that should assure their being able to do the same kinds of work throughout their college careers.

The description of the IT systems that will comprise the information systems infrastructure is detailed and carefully thought out.

The application explicitly states that the data applications will be interoperable (e.g., able to be used on both Mac, PCs and Android devices); and will use, to as much a degree possible, "open systems" that tend to be less expensive and permit students and faculty to add their own modules to them.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The model which the application employs for continuous improvement is described as Monitoring – Mentoring – Sharing Data. This is a very effective model that is fully in keeping with high-quality plan and it is likely to be successful. This approach is referenced through the grid display that provides details on all these activities that focus on mentoring strategies, measuring strategies and strategies for sharing data. A point has been deducted because followup activities are not scheduled for evaluation after the project ends.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application includes what they describe as a new paradigm for ongoing communication and engagement and communication that based on the highly respected research of Bryck, Davies and Mapp. It's a technology-based approach and it is wide-spread in its breadth and vision – particularly in regard to its multilingual capabilities.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The section's responses are spread out through a number of sections, but taken in total they include discussions of all the performance measures necessary for this to be considered a high-quality plan. The risk classifications are not usually found in projects such as these. The Leading and Lagging Indicators report referenced in the section is an example of how they will use data warehouse data to make ongoing corrections in their programs.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application provides a system of monitoring the effectiveness of investments through quarterly plans, accountability-driven</p>		

data analysis, school walk-throughs, and monitoring usage. Particularly noteworthy is setting aside funds in the application's budget for an external evaluator.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It is noteworthy that of its own volition, the district is earmarking nearly \$15 million in "matching funds" from sources such as i3, Title I and school improvement grants to magnify the effects of the \$20 million that is being requested via this application. It's also noteworthy that the supplemental funding is largely directed at start-up activities during the first two years of the project; thus preserving more of the R2T's funds for operations-oriented activities once most of the project's activities are fully implemented.</p> <p>The investment priorities – such as blended learning, educator effectiveness, extended learning, assessment to inform instruction, etc. – are well-thought out and likely to lead to the project's success.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application makes the well reasoned agreement that through building student, teacher and parent capacity within the Boston 365 schools, and serving as a model and launching program for continuing the program in all middle schools, the chances for these activities and policies to be sustained after the grant ends are greatly enhanced. The application goes on to identify other programs – notably The Gates Foundation and MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – whose support would likely be sought in making this program district-wide and extending it on a national or state-wide scale, and up to the high school level. While not required, sustainability would be further improved if provisions were made for extending these strategies to high schools these students will attend after graduation from middle school.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The quality of this application, the thought and citations that serve to support its activities, and its deeply encompassing breadth suggest that private and public sources and organizations are likely to support and seek to extend this plan. The application lists a myriad of potential sources by name and suggests reasons that each would make good partner with BPS to support these activities. A point has been deducted because on the Digital Literacy Proficiency Exam because only 50% of the students are forecasted to pass this measure by 2016. This measure needs to be explained, and a rationale should be presented for why expectations are so low. However the Family and Community Partner Engagement shows a strong commitment to bringing technologies into low-income families. The partnership will track progress by means the district's data systems and the transparency they offer in making public virtually all their data and recommendations.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not	Met

	Met	
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This application provides a technology-based approach to empowering students, parents, teachers and administrators to create much more personalized learning environments in their schools. The high scores awarded to all the sections of the application attest to the likelihood that, if funded, this project will lead to growths in expectations for what constitutes personalized learning environment for middle school students anywhere in the United States.</p>		
Total	210	205



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Technical Review Form

Application #1297MA-2 for Boston Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Boston 365 demonstrates a sophisticated vision focused at the middle school level that expands on district reforms in their Acceleration Agenda strategic plan. The Blended Learning with Technology chart depicts focus across six elements in extended learning time, personalized learning ecosystem, engaging families and communities, collaborative spaces for learning, and using assessments to inform instruction and demonstrate learning.</p> <p>Overall, the vision is well-designed to increase student access beyond Common Core to rigorous standards and assessments by increasing proficiency with technology (iPads; online content), teacher access to real-time student achievement data and customized digital content for students, extensive professional development and coaching to increase effective teaching, and targeted to Boston's High Support (Level 3) schools with a preference in the RFP school selection process and extra coaching time.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Boston 365 presents an innovative implementation approach using a competitive RFP process to select schools to participate in the RTTD project. Schools will design and submit individualized proposal for their school-level implementation and following the conditions delineated for participation in the Boston 365 project.</p> <p>About 20 schools will be selected within 100 days of the grant and 6-8 grade-level schools. The district commits to ensure preference to High Support (Level 3) schools with highest low-income, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners. Data presented indicate BPS is a large urban district with high 74% low-income student population; however, the actual number of high-need students in schools who participate in the project is currently unknown due to the RFP process.</p> <p>Boston's implementation represents a strong approach using an RFP process to engage stakeholders at the school-level in the project.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Boston 365 demonstrated a high-quality plan based on strong factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six-point, Blended Learning with Technology model as theory of change model. 		

- Rubric for Effective Teaching to increase effective teaching capacity and reach student outcome goals.
- Tenets and deliverables to operationalize the Boston 365 strategy,
- Student and Educator-Centric Implementation Plans with goals, activities, and responsible parties.

Boston presents strong scale-up beyond RTTD project and how Boston 365 project will be used by BPS to establish district-wide student and family access to high-quality, personalized learning schools in each new district zone as part of the new school choice model under development in the district. Implementation of the tenets of Boston 365 supports middle school student academic success into high school and beyond. Potential impact extended as non-participating schools recognize the Boston 365 reform benefits for their schools too.

While there are strong plans to reform, the RFP process leaves potential unknowns and thus justifying a score of 9.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Boston 365 provided strong data and targets on summative assessments based on State targets, including subgroups.

- Based on the Composite Performance Index (CPI) overall group baseline 72% in 2010, 68.7% in 2011, the target 76.8% for 2012 is unclear for 6th grade English Language Arts (ELA). Students with Disabilities group baseline 55.3% in 2010, 50.1% in 2011, and target 62.8% in 2012 is unclear for 6th grade ELA. In Math 6th grade, for ELL, Asian, and White subgroups, the scores in 2011 were higher than baseline scores in 2010; however, it is unclear how targets, lower than actual 2011, were derived for 2012.

Boston 365 provided strong data and targets on decreasing achievement gaps, including subgroups. The methodology for obtaining achievement gaps using CPI between the subgroup and the state's highest performing group may have exaggerated achievement gaps than when compared to related subgroup at the state level, i.e. BPS SWD compared to State SWD.

Boston 365 provided data and target charts for high school graduation rates, including subgroups. Goals may be too ambitious based solely on 2010 data, without 2011 data currently unavailable. For example, SWD rate of 40.8% in 2010 and target at 80% for 2012 is difficult to evaluate as achievable, without more data from 2011.

College enrollment data and target chart provided with subgroups; however, some data missing waiting for updates by National Student Clearinghouse. Five-percent gain goal is reasonable for school year 2012 and subsequent 10% gain goal 2013 and beyond are quite ambitious, particularly for subgroups, but achievable.

In addition, Boston 365 will use two district predictive formative assessments to measure student growth over time, that strongly supports interim feedback to support goals for improved student outcomes.

Overall, Boston 365 presented strong LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Boston Public Schools nationally distinguished its record of success in 2006 as winner of educational Broad Prize as district advancing student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

However, the most recent performance has flattened and overall below state performance levels. Data show flattened decline in closing achievement gaps at middle school level by race. In 7th grade in ELA, the AA/Black subgroup performance was at 41% proficiency and Latino at 45%, while Asian and White consistently performed at 70% proficiency and above.

Graduation rates indicate gradual increase over years from 2008-2011, including subgroups, such as for student with disabilities from 36.9 to 41%, and AA/Black from 59.6 to 62.3%.

College enrollment example for class of 2007 indicates 77.8% enrolled in college after one year graduating high school while the college enrollment rate for class of 2005 was 77.2%. However, the rates for AA/Black and Hispanic, 28.2% and 23.9% are substantially lower than white and Asian students at 53.3% and 52%, respectively.

Demonstrated strong record of success using reform programs targeted to low-performing schools, particularly in 11 Turnaround schools with student growth percentile in ELA and math higher than the district-wide student growth percentile. The school district presented reform

programs for low-performing schools and students including: Failure Not An Option program doubled in size 2011-12 in middle and high schools, TILT program expanded school day through i3 grant (ending), formal district achievement gap policy, district Accelerated Agenda, and exemplar schools demonstrate previous success.

Strong availability of student performance data to students, teachers, and parents using contemporary systems such as interactive data dashboard at district and school levels, and Student and Family Portal.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)

5

4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Boston LEA presented high level transparency with all BPS salaries made public through annual Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and posted on the Boston Globe and Boston Herald websites. All funds budget by account, program, schools, and department including salaries for instructional and teaching are posted on the BPS LEA website. However, it is unclear whether salaries posted are based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications as required by the criterion.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Boston LEA demonstrates strong history and autonomy in State context for implementation of Boston365 including:

- Massachusetts awarded state RTT grant in 2010, received waiver for NCLB in Feb 2012, and adopted Common Core State Standards
- BPS offers a variety of school options, i.e. traditional, turn-around, innovation, in-district charters, and affiliated alternative education.
- MA Act Relative to the Achievement Gap 2010 granted LEAS flexibilities on instruction, staffing, resource allocation, and labor contracts may be limited beyond school-levels

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

9

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Boston Public Schools demonstrates strong response to stakeholder and engagement evidenced by:

- Teacher shares meetings conducted by Superintendent across city to discuss teacher concerns.
- Reaching out to 2,300 residents spring 2012 about equitable student assignment process; however, this is a small sample for Boston district.
- Boston Teachers Union reviewed and approved this proposal.
- Proposal reviewed by 3-middle school principals.
- All schools serving 6-8 were surveyed, and teacher focus group conducted on role of digital media.
- 15 teachers surveyed about the professional development in this proposal.

Numerous and a variety of letters of support provided by stakeholders include: Mayor of Boston, Boston Industry Council, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Stand for Children parents organization, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Boston Student Advisory Council, and some emails with responses to reviews. Notably, this includes state MA department of education's review comments.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

BPS provided high-quality plan including timelines, metrics for participants, and training descriptions for substantial record of investments in personalized learning since 2005, chart by grade-level including two school-wides for status of using blended learning strategies, and a chart on Reforms focused on Boston 365 Key Elements by schools with current status indicated for each element.

Boston 365 plans to conduct comprehensive assessment of current state of personalized learning in middle schools using survey, walkthroughs, observations, and SAMR model to evaluate degree of personalized learning.

The logic or theory of change premised on Boston 365 believes that improved student learning requires improved instruction. Overall, Boston 365 logic or theory of change is depicted in 6-point Blended Learning with Technology chart, and illustrates focus that schools are the unit of change for instruction to improve and school transformation strategy to personalize learning.

Overall, Boston 365 demonstrated strong evidence of analysis of needs and gaps; however, the RFP process leaves potential unknown needs and gaps per participating schools, justifying a score of 4.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Boston 365 presents a high-quality plan for learning in the project supported by the following strong strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tenets of Boston 365 with deliverables to Operationalize the Boston 365 Strategy in blended and extended learning; family, community and partner engagement, collaborative virtual space, foster inclusive environment, and assessments to inform instruction and develop effective educators. • The Conditions of Participation and school-level commitments evidenced through school selection criteria and priority in the school-level RFP process. • The Boston 365 Implementation with documented activities and timeline through full implementation in August 2016. • An exemplary Student-Centric Implementation Plan with goals, activities, responsible parties, and training and support to students. <p>Overall the framework to prepare students for college and career-ready is provided through the Common Core State Standards, adopted by the State of Massachusetts. However, Boston 365 will strength the framework with reading and writing as the "anchors" to accelerate learning and mastery of standards across academic areas. Formative and diagnostic assessments conducted in the district at 3 points in the year, will provide student-level data matched to standards to monitor and personalize instruction and extra supports. Innovative applications will run across the student's educational environment such as using a computer game model to support on-time graduation and skills tracker and conference with teachers.</p> <p>Using digital and interactive educational tools to capture student interests, motivate and involve students with personally adapted, in-depth, rich content and collaborative environment with blogs, etc. BPS has a high-need and diverse student population from over 100 countries and 46% speaking another language; however, culturally responsive teaching practices combined with universal integration of technology will make relevant connection to diverse community in the classroom and school. Boston 365 will cultivate participating and future schools with high expectations for all students, using instructional practices that blend with technology and personalize the learning experience particularly for high-need and diverse student population.</p> <p>Boston provides a rich 3-prong assessment approach of, for, and as learning, personalized. Massachusetts state assessments, NAEP data, and student information system are accessible by school administrators, educators, students and parents. Formative, summative, and just-in-time learning assessments will provide strong and multiple, ongoing and regular feedback for students and educators. Achievement Network (ANet) or BPS ATI systems provide student data in real-time and available to teachers, parents, and students.</p> <p>BPS is in its third year of Academic Achievement Framework using a multi-tiered system based nationally recognized models Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for student's social-emotional, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving.</p> <p>While there are strong plan for learning, based on the individual school plan, the RFP process leaves potential unknowns including variation among learning plans within each school's proposal. Because the full scope and plan of each school is unknown, the overall Boston 365 plan is weakened.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Boston 365 plan is distinguished by strong supports and evaluation for high-need teaching as well as high-need learners in a blended and personalized learning environment with technology. Following high-quality Educator-Centric and Boston 365 Implementation and budget plans, with goals, activities, resources, timeline through full implementation in August 2016, and responsible parties to drive successful implementation.</p> <p>Highly focused professional development for teachers and leaders in rigorous and standards-based content, assessment,</p>		

cultural competence, and using data to differentiate instruction, particularly for high-need students.

Boston 365 identifies reform actions including:

- Directed and specific central office staff and department support.
- Additional formative assessments aligned to CCSS in ELA and math in grades 6-8 to monitor student progress, and use data to adapt blended learning instruction every 6-8 weeks.
- Online professional development and collaboration facilitated by 21st Century Literacy Specialists and Coaches.
- Principals required participation in PD on Leading Schools in a Web 2.0 world program.
- Instructional coaching, and literacy and educational technology specialists assigned to work directly with high-need teachers and schools.
- Adapt 21st Century Leadership Cadres to Boston 365.
- Expand online courses in LogOn grant for struggling high schoolers repeating 9th grade core courses for credit.
- Expand access to edX, free online courses from Harvard and MIT.
- Continued support for school-based teacher leaders and priority areas using existing RTT state funds.
- Notably, educators will be required to join at least 2 school-based online Professional Learning Networks as part of the Learn and Lead Network, designed to engage teachers with peers, colleagues, and school leaders in the professional development process.

Strong approach to improve practice and accountability in meeting the individual needs of students as Boston 365 will align with BPS online Educator Development & Feedback System for teacher and principal evaluation, following the Effective Educator Rubric. Action-based processes and tools designed to match student needs such as quarterly review of leader and teacher improvement to identify and evaluate areas in need of support. A new teacher contract between the teacher union and school district includes student performance factor in evaluation ratings and will help increase effective teachers and principals for effective instruction and school leadership.

While there is a strong plan for teaching including stronger and specific requirements for teachers, based on the individual school plan, the RFP process leaves potential unknowns including variation among teaching support plans within each school's proposal. Because the full scope and plan of each school is unknown, the overall Boston 365 plan is weakened.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The project budget, Boston 365 Implementation, and School Conditions documents evidence high-quality LEA plan with goals, activities, responsible parties, deliverables, and costs to support successful implementation. New BPS LEA central office staff will provide dedicated support to Boston 365 successful school implementation including full-time Project Director for oversight in planning, implementation and coordination; part-time Project Manager to support daily program operations in schools, three 21st Century Literacy Specialists for coaching in assigned cohort of schools, and four Technology Support Specialists for dedicated instructional technology support in schools. School-based teacher leaders, funded by the school, will receive an annual stipend to ensure personalized learning across grades, content areas and differentiated learning needs among the school faculty.

Strong school-level flexibility and autonomy evidenced for the four types of schools in BPS eligible to participate in Boston 365 including Traditional, Innovation, In-District Charter/Pilot. Table evidenced autonomy and flexibility specifically by school type for state, district, budget, staffing, governance, curriculum/assessment, school calendar, and professional development, enrollment, etc. The table also indicates any restrictions such as curriculum must align with Massachusetts Curriculum Framework, schools must administer BPS predictive assessments, and schools provide MCAS state assessment data files to BPS, etc.

Boston 365 will offer students stronger opportunities to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery mainly through flexible grouping based on individual student task and need, not time. Teacher Portfolios training and online in Moodle and BPS Connect to capture best practices, student work samples, and processes, as well as publicly share across all schools.

In the school-based RFP process for selection in Boston 365 project, schools will outline specifically how they will give students an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple, comparable way. Convincing example described for the Tobin School plan to implement a bilingual, multi-cultural, immersion hybrid learning model consisting of direct and online instruction, as well as project-based learning in 5-6 week cycles, using a spectrum of electronic portfolios that may include assessments, exhibitions, and formal presentations where students can demonstrate mastery of the standards, and accessible by all teachers, students, families, and

direct student service partners.

The Boston 365 Project Director identified to ensure students with disabilities and ELLs have equitable access to learning resources and their teachers receive professional develop for instructional practices related to Universal Design for Learning, e-books, and adaptive technologies such as text to speech software, and Bookshare online library for print disabilities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

BPS LEA and infrastructure as well as Boston 365 vision demonstrate strong support for successful personalized, blended learning with technology implementation with secured access to educators, students, families and related stakeholders.

While the hallmark of the project will provide every student in participating schools with a wireless-ready mobile device, Boston will seek partnerships to provide 4G access so all students will have access to their personalized learning environment extended beyond school hours and regardless of income. The City of Boston's Community of Learning Initiative also supports student and family access in public libraries and communities.

Notably, BPS already provides teachers with laptops for instructional use in the classroom and can take home both during school year and summer. However, Boston 365 will provide teacher training to ensure using technology and online content to differentiate instruction and personalized, blended learning with technologies.

BPS is currently implementing new Family & Community Engagement Portal where all parents will have access to their child's performance data, in a downloadable format. Further strengthened by strategies including the nationally recognized Tech Goes Home program, partnership with Comcast internet provider, Internet Essentials program, and Parent University programs designed to provide a strong support system to ensure families have access to internet and broadband at home, and training to develop digital and technology skills for both the workforce and to support their child's successful education. Parents

Participating schools will be expected to establish cadres for unique student-run technology technical support programs. While the BPS Office of Instructional and Information Technology will support schools in these programs, and assist to establish student apprenticeships around technology competencies, and just-in-time Service Desk to educators, students, and families; however, these services may be limited to school hours.

Boston 365 describes a sophisticated vision and BPS new student information system (Aspen) developments, including merging their legacy yet interoperable data systems, within a new launch pad system to improve access across the multitude of data systems based on secured user access to educators, students, families, and related stakeholders. They also describe intriguing cumulus, cloud-based platform with student electronic cubbies and parent access; however, the applicant does not appear to address systems that allow parents and student to export their information in an open data format.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Boston 365 is using a highly professional and rigorous strategy that the BPS CIO and Boston 365 Project Director will hire an external evaluator to monitor and conduct formative research to provide periodic feedback to BPS and partners on the grant project implementation. A strong array of evaluation practices including site visits, interviews, teacher surveys, on-site observations, walkthroughs, and teacher focus groups will provide valuable and timely periodic feedback across the project implementation.

BPS district technical assistance will support the school-based Instructional Leadership Team in refining and improving redesign plan across implementation at the school-level.

It is a unique strategy that BPS will monitor and measure student technology and digital literacy proficiency by developing and using the formative assessment system, and teacher technology proficiency will be evaluated using the Teacher Self Assessment Tool.

BPS will submit required data for annual technology implementation plan to State of MA, and collect technology metrics to evaluate and make ongoing adjustments using data points for network, internet, activity and module completions, and functionality.

BPS will develop and host a unique online repository of practices for the blended use of technology in learning that will follow the term of the grant and be available to other BPS schools, leaders, and teachers.

BPS has strong strategy to publicly share data on all measures during implementation through the BPS and school websites, quarterly newsletter sent to all middle school student households, quarterly updates and existing district communication channels to BPS staff, and semi-annual report to the Boston School Committee, also covered by the local newspapers and media.

BPS will develop and host a unique online repository of practices for the blended use of technology in learning that will follow the term of the grant and be available to other BPS schools, leaders, and teachers. However, this is the only response that specifically addresses after-grant continuous improvement process.

Overall, BPS reflects strong strategies for continuous improvement process.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Boston 365 provided the following in-depth, and strong strategies in responding to this criteria for ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders:

- Boston 365 collaborated in proposal development with BPS Office of Family and Student Engagement.
- Boston 365 will follow BPS district Accelerated Agenda using recognized research by Bryck, Davies, and Mapp with engagement strategies and priority focused on academics and school improvement.
- BPS evaluates and monitors results in their stakeholder communication through BPS School Climate Surveys.
- Provides Parent Portal help page, Family Guides to Learning about the Common Core standards, and Google Translate tool on the Student Information System Parent Portal to access in own home language.
- BPS started training about 50 Family and Student Engagement staff members on how to support families with the Parent Portal.
- Conducts various outreach through online webinars to staff, sessions at Parent University training, translating Parent Portal in the 8 major languages spoken by BPS families, and developing citywide Parent Portal Outreach Campaign.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant thoroughly presented 14 academic and 2 social-emotional indicators and targets for performance measures in continuous improvement process related to middle school grade levels, the focus of the project. The rationale, information obtained from the measure, and targets, typically 10 percent gains, for each measure were indicated, as well as particular priorities or problems. An extensive chart was provided with performance measures, applicable population, including subgroups, baseline, and targets for 2012-13 to 2016-17.

The list of performance measures includes:

- Two social-emotional indicators obtained through BPS Annual School Climate Survey.
- Two district-wide predictive assessments aligned to state MCAS exams in ELA and math for grades 6-7-8.
- Grades in 6-7-8 in core content of ELA, math, social studies, and science.
- Out-of-school suspensions rates; noted working to reduce disparity with higher rates for African American students.
- School attendance rates.
- District dashboards updated daily for student enrollment, demographics, and current school year leading indicators (attendance, suspensions, and academic grades), and lagging indicators using academic profiles from prior school year.

Notably, in addition, and specifically for this application, the off-track risk classifications for 7th and 8th graders will be used as leading indicator for program effectiveness, with noted problem in retention rate of 19% in 9th grade. The risk weightings were established in collaboration with the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

A strong process to review and improve the performance measures over time to gauge implementation will be conducted bi-annually by the Boston 365 Advisory Committee with BPS Office of Research, Assessment & Evaluation and the external evaluator to review the efficacy of the measures.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Boston 365 presented rigorous plan using the following 4 processes to evaluate effectiveness of RTT funded investments:

- Conduct Quarterly Review in three phases: data analysis and preparation, Quarterly Review meeting, follow-up using Basecamp (district project management tool). School-level leadership teams will participate and present executive summaries and data

packets (MCAS results by grade level, subject, and subgroups). An intriguing meeting protocol used where schools will be asked to identify three Problems of Performance based on evidence of student learning, and follow-up public task list developed.

- Hire an external evaluator from grant funds to verify the efficacy of the program and proper implementation of the Boston 365 Tenets.
- Conduct School walkthroughs by key central office to determine appropriate use of technology tools in the classrooms.
- Monitor usage as indicator for various technology portals in the project. Usage traffic, traffic time used to determine whether the project investment is extending student learning time after school and weekends, and popular programs for future program decision-making.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Boston 365 has submitted an exemplary budget that identifies all funds that will support the project, is clear and sufficient to support the project implementation, provides rationale and description for investments and priorities, and specifies funding that will be one-time versus recurring.</p> <p>Essentially the \$20m RTT grant is designed to support 5,200 middle grade students in Boston and a system of initiatives to create the personalized learning "ecosystems" and blended learning using technology.</p> <p>An incredible \$14.5m funding will come from the general BPS budget, BPS school budgets, Title I funds, i3 Investing in Innovation grant, and School Improvement Grants to support projects within and parallel to the Boston 365 project. However, funding such as Title I, and i3 and School Improvement grants have restrictions on use of that funding; therefore Boston may be overstating funding supports from these areas.</p> <p>Clearly the budget funding matches the proposal narrative submitted by Boston 365. This is illustrated by 25% of the budget going to change the culture in schools and blended learning into the classrooms, effective teaching practices for personalized learning, and other school-level support staff to successful implementation in the schools. These budget expenditures contribute to long-term sustainability beyond the term of the grant.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Boston 365 presents a thoughtful and optimistic assessment of sustainability for the project, including two variable budget options to sustain the project implementation after the term of the grant. The applicant relies on a cost-neutral approach beyond the grant term with focus on the underlying factors in building capacity and pilot program to influence future resource allocations in the district.</p> <p>Building capacity reflects back to the 25% of the budget spent on faculty and staff at the school-levels to personalize and implement blended learning with technology. Hence, this investment continues forward, except for estimated 6% teacher turnover in future years at the participating schools.</p> <p>The pilot program concept relies on concept that the program obtains future support from the general BPS funding whereby other expenditures are reassigned to Boston 365 funding. This rationale has potential to replace limited funding, i.e. textbooks.</p> <p>The sustainability suggests other possible funding sources including the Gates and other Foundations and grants, and the city and state based on recent promotions to support technology in schools. Based on the success of Boston to secure grant funding, the foundation and grant funding theory is the most convincing to this reviewer. However, new initiative funding from city and state budgets seem unlikely given current budget constraints; thus, less convincing.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Boston presents a convincing competitive priority indicating Boston's unique approach to partnerships to reduce inequities of access and experiences for high-need student population. Appropriately, Boston has strategically focused partnerships to fill the gaps in extended learning time after school and over the summer to prevent summer-loss in achievement and provide rich opportunities otherwise exposed such as BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) , and strengthen the daily learning in the after school programs such as Boston After Schools & Beyond.

Boldly, Boston 365 will require as a condition of the participating schools to engage a partner to deepen their efforts to personalize and extend learning using technology. However, the middle schools were noted as weakest at developing partnerships, and the district will provide \$160,000 seed money allocated to supporting community partnerships and will provide technical assistance such as rubric of criteria for selecting partnership with high-impact potential. Middle schools in Boston lag behind other grade levels in mentoring, tutoring, prevention programming, after-school programs, and mental health services, based on the Community Partnerships Report 2012.

A sound Boston 365 strategy to use the pre-existing structure, Academic Achievement Framework (AAF) with important tool for schools and link between social-emotional-behavioral supports and academic achievement. The system based on nationally recognized Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) models. The AAF structure uses electronic tracker on indicators, resources, and strategies. Academic, English language development, and social-emotional-behavioral are the 3-domain indicators. AAF describes an intensive, whole-child approach, long-standing partnerships such as the YMCA and Mass General. This structure and electronic access strongly support high-need student population and academic achievement.

An exemplar of success in BPS partnership with Citizen Schools presents an intriguing support system, particularly for the middle school level including: academic support, career exploration, college preparation, and student engagement using hands-on curriculum, Citizen Teachers, 8th Grade Academy, and a community of achievers. More compelling are the 20% higher graduation rates for Citizen School students and significantly higher achievement scores on state exit exams an other BPS students.

Boston demonstrated use of data to target resources and improve results with charts for population level measures, type of result, desired results, baseline and target performance results, including subgroups. Most targets appear appropriate.

The target for Digital Literacy in grades 6-8 stands out at 42-51% in 2016-17 as a low target in a technology-based project. As technology is the pinnacle of the project, this low target weakened the plan.

Overall, Boston has provided a fairly strong competitive preference priority.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Boston 365 presented a coherent and comprehensive proposal designed to create personalized and blended learning through technology with a strategically important and appropriate focus at the middle school level to impact future on-time graduation, college enrollment, and career readiness; particularly for high-need student population. The project is also distinguished by the school-based RFP process for selecting schools to participate in the project. With 25% of the budget dedicated to support faculty and staff in schools, the plan is clearly committed at the school-level to improve high-need teaching and principal practices, and parent engagement across the technology project. This project has high potential to inform and reform middle school education across the nation.

Total	210	181
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form



Application #1297MA-3 for Boston Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Boston school district's reform agenda is based on a vision of district graduates that is articulated in their Acceleration Agenda which is consistent with the four educational assurance areas. Within that vision is a school transformation strategy for middle grades students that is called Boston365 -- the focus for this grant. That plan calls for new thinking around "blended learning" which is defined as the blending of traditional learning with digital learning both inside and outside the classroom. Blended learning is the vehicle to promote personalized learning. The vision calls for six areas of action or elements to the Boston365 plan: (1) blended learning with technology, (2) extended learning opportunities, (3) fostering an inclusive environment, (4) engaging families and communities, (5) creating collaborative spaces for learning, and (6) use of assessments to inform instruction and demonstrate learning. The plan provides a clearly articulated chart that lays out the connections between the six actions and four educational assurance areas. The blended approach offers an intuitive way to conceptualize learning more holistically, expand and deepen learning, and give access to those opportunities to all students. The explanation in this section is compelling and deserves maximum points - 10.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Boston365 plan says it will invite all schools, including charters, with middle grades students (6-8) to participate. That includes a population of nearly 12,000 students and 475 teachers. The plan calls for a competitive process for each applying school to develop a customized plan that leverages all six elements of Boston365 (see A1 for details). Special preference will be given to four subgroups: schools with only middle grades enrollments (according to Appendix 3 that is 9 schools), low-income schools (no numbers are given but with 78% of the total student population eligible for free lunch, most schools will probably meet this criterion), schools with high concentrations of students with disabilities, and schools with high concentrations of English language learners. No data are provided for school breakdowns with those latter two demographics.</p> <p>In addition to the required data on implementing schools, the Boston365 plan calls for several key components, including the use of parent universities to support parent engagement, a rethinking of libraries as a way to create more collaborative access to learning resources, and rethinking assessment at multiple levels for learning. In this latter category the plan makes the useful distinction among assessments of learning (traditional summative tools), assessments for learning (formative tools), and assessments as learning.</p> <p>Finally, the plan provides detailed actions for year one implementation. This includes how to select the 20 possible award granted schools (9 criteria are specified), support for how to construct their plan -- this is invaluable, and five phases of implementation. The plan makes clear that the Office of Instruction and Information Technology will guide this process. Even more details of the phases of implementation are provided in Appendix 17. The only missing piece is how or whether technology and/or instructional coaches will help the schools conceptualize or write their plans.</p> <p>These details, with minor omissions, prompted a high range score of 9.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan calls for the district to collect extensive data on implementation and use the lessons learned from successes of 20 schools to bring the project to scale across the district using an existing Rubric for Effective Teaching (Appendix 25). What is missing from that discussion is any clear articulation for how all this innovative learning can be reinforced and strengthened at the high school level once students leave the confines of their blended learning environment of their middle schools.</p> <p>A logic model is articulated both here and in section B5. The logic, in summary, suggests that effective teaching is the</p>		

linchpin of effective learning and the school is the most appropriate unit of change for instructional improvement. But effective teaching must begin with excitement by students about their learning. Excitement for learning comes from ownership and control of learning. And the access to effective technology 24/7 is one key way to enhance ownership and control. Thus, the blended learning that brings technology access outside the classroom as an integral player in the inclass learning is a potentially powerful way to transform student engagement and learning.

The plan calls for setting standards for all participants based on the six key elements of the Boston365 plan.

The plan also introduces the notion of a "quadrant analysis" to help track the progress of these innovative school efforts. While there is discussion of this concept in the text and in Appendix 28, there is no model or detailed description. It appears as though each school is categorized (high vs. low?) on two criteria: proficiency rates and growth. Schools that consistently fall in the low/low quadrant will receive more attention. What is unclear is whether proficiency and growth are just summative measures or whether there are also formative indicators that will be used to broaden the measurement of school performance.

The plan also outlines possible collaboration with outside partners in the region to move the plan to scale. This region has a wealth of such partners (universities and think tank organizations) and the district provides evidence of past collaboration and future intent to work with those partners.

The strengths of this plan outweigh some of the deficiencies and warrant a high range score of 8.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The plan makes the case, through documented research, that academic achievement by 8th grade has a larger impact on college and career readiness than anything a student does academically in high school. That is a powerful lever for reforming what happens to young adolescents in the middle learning years. The district has used studies from their larger Acceleration Agenda reform to set the goals in this section. The four summative performance measures (math and ELA for both composite performance and growth) are outlined by grade level. There is a vast array of different goals depending upon starting points but in general the performance goals are to increase 10 to 15 points (e.g. from 65% to 79% for 6th grade math) and to improve growth percentiles 10% each year of the plan. These appear to both be ambitious yet achievable given past numbers. The gap goals, for various subgroups (low-income, ethnicity, SwD, and ELL), are also extensive, but in general an approximate average is that the gap will decrease by half over the course of plan implementation. This is certainly ambitious given the lack of gap reduction in the previous four years. The current graduation rate across the district is 64% and this does not vary much by ethnicity or income, but ELL and SwD clearly have lower rates. The goal is to move all these groups to 85% -- an admirable target which will, if achieved, eliminate any gaps. Finally, the goal is to increase college enrollment figures from the current 63% by 10% a year. That would mean that by the end of the grant 94% of all graduates would enroll in college. That is a very high bar, one that may be particularly challenging, as few urban districts have that level of attainment.

Overall, these goals may seem overly ambitious given the district's most recent longitudinal trends, but the dramatic changes to learning promoted by the blended learning plan convinces this reader that the achievement targets might be met.

These detailed projections and goals appear both ambitious and achievable and the plan is awarded a score in the high range of 9.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Department scoring guide asks for evidence of reform activity in three areas. Thus, the evaluation of the plan will involve distributing points across each of these on a five point scale (i.e., weighting each equally), to arrive at a potential aggregate score of 15.

(a) Improving learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps: The plan makes a clear case for fairly dramatic improvements in achievement early in the 2000s. Indeed, the district was the winner of the Broad Prize for significant urban student achievement gains. But much of that growth happened before the most recent four years of data have become available. That is what the criterion asks that the district be judged on. Most recent four year data suggest either very flat

trends or very small gains with only a few exceptions (e.g., 10th grade ELA and 6th grade math). On the other hand, there has been steady progress for ELL students, as well as students with disabilities, although that latter group only had reported data for two of four grades. The gap analysis also seems to indicate little narrowing. Indeed, there were no graphs presented for trends in math for achievement gaps. Graduation rates have made small but steady improvements and there is text support for growth in college enrollment but little supporting data. The program, Success Boston, appears to be promising with a focus on getting high school students ready for college, getting them into college, and then having them go through college. To further support the improved learning outcomes and gap narrowing the proposal highlighted three exemplars of success: Clarence Edwards (through an i3 grant), Failure Is Not an Option, and Tech Boston Academy -- an innovative high school that recently incorporated middle grades students. The overall evidence warrants a middle range score of 3.

(b) Reform in persistently low-achieving schools: One of the district's greater achievements has been the performance improvements in persistently low-achieving schools. On average the scores in those schools have jumped 4.4 points in ELA and 8.1 points in math while there has been no district wide improvement, on average across all schools. On the other hand, those positive changes have not been consistent across all 11 schools -- several of them have seen flat or even negative shifts in performance. The growth reported in these schools has been primarily attributed to the implementation of best practices with fidelity. There is no more powerful statistic than the fact that families choosing these schools has increased by 44%. The application also highlights an exemplar school from that batch -- Orchard Gardens -- which has focused its reform on finding the right staff, extending the school day, effectively using data to guide decisions, and promoting a school culture that encourages learning. These indicators warrant a high score of 4.

(c) Make student data available to students, educators, and parents: The district reports that it has invested heavily in upgrading its data systems, with new interactive data dashboards just online this fall, for use by teachers and school leaders. The district has also recognized that traditional forms of communication with parents and students is no longer sufficient. Instead, a new Student and Parent Portal has just come online so that parents can now access a range of information, including the ability to track a child's bus around the streets of Boston. As with other criteria, the district has also chosen to highlight two data exemplars, including school choice processes and the district's Acceleration Agenda dashboard that provides up-to-date information on where the district is, where it is going, and what they are doing to get there. These efforts to enhance data produced a maximum score of 5.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)

5

2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

For this criterion the district offered text assurances that budgets are made available, but no sample school budgets were presented in the plan. A couple of positive features include a new teachers' contract that mandates all school budgets must be shared with school site councils, and that weighted budgets (giving more resources to schools with high concentrations of high-needs students) help alleviate any financial inequities. The language in the text states that "salaries for all employees are available to the public" but it is unclear whether those include breakdowns by instructional staff, teachers only, or non-personnel expenditures. This level of vagueness produced a score in the middle range of 2.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Several factors promote the idea that the state has fostered a climate of reform and innovation in schools. First, the state was one of the few successful RTTT applicants at the state level. Second, the legislature passed new educational reform legislation in 2010 promoting more autonomy in school settings. Currently 15 of the district's 137 schools have implemented organizational structures that increase their levels of autonomy. The 20 schools that are likely to be supported by this project will also likely qualify for those increased levels of autonomy. And, finally, the state was granted NCLB waivers by the federal government, giving more latitude in interpreting outcome requirements for schools. This should promote the kinds of outcomes these new personalized learning environments might pursue. Consequently, this criterion produced a maximum score of 10.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

9

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Several concrete examples are provided in the proposal that the district has reached out to stakeholders in the preparation of this proposal or in similar situations where reform was contemplated. First they described how they involved 2300 community members this spring and summer in helping formulate a revised student assignment process (i.e., how students are assigned to schools). While this does not have a direct bearing on technology it is immensely important to the process to ensure that all students have an equitable chance at being in one of the 20 reformed Boston365 schools. Second, the district described how they have reached out to staff through "Teacher Shares" which are informal chats to discuss what is on teachers' minds

about their conditions of employment. That latter outreach has led to important changes in how the district approaches both professional development and the delivery of services to student with disabilities -- both key features of this proposal. Appendix 23 provides a well reasoned case study of a teacher whose pedagogy has been dramatically altered by the introduction of technology. Third, the application (Appendix 34) includes a diverse set of letters of support for this initiative. These range from community groups to important potential partners and they all reflect an understanding of what the vision of the district is with technology taking center stage for young adolescent learning. The one group of missing letters of support was those from teacher and school leader professional organizations, although the president of the local teacher union did sign the application. These two groups are critical to the full implementation of this vision. Finally, the plan details ten steps the district has taken to ensure engagement of internal stakeholders (e.g., surveys of principals about programmatic design issues and a forum for teachers this summer on the role of digital media in the classroom). These contributions to the criterion response yielded a high range score of 9.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

This response to the criterion focuses on documenting already existing activities within the district to use technology as a way to personalize student learning. The plan notes that existing efforts have focused on (1) developing capacity among educators, and (2) providing students opportunities to engage with technology. One table documents efforts at different grade levels (e.g., high school students using online resources for credit recovery). Another describes six different initiatives to invest in educators' capacity to better use technology. In this latter category the district has already trained 4600 teachers through their Laptops for Learning project on how to use laptops for instruction in the classroom. 4600 teachers have also been trained on how to better use the student information system as a tool for instructional management. As with many other sections of the proposal, the plan also provides several cases studies to illustrate existing progress. The most impressive one was the training of 50 high school teachers to implement a global philanthropic initiative using digital tools (e.g. documentary film making). But in addition to what the district has already done to assess and address needs and gaps, the plan also outlines each of the major initiatives across the district and how they will address the six key elements of the Boston365 plan. This level of articulation illustrates a focus on coherence across the plan which should ensure most needs and gaps are addressed. This response warrants maximum points - 5.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This section of the plan calls for the applicant to describe in detail what will change in the students' experiences as they approach learning in new ways. There are a number of specified criteria, the applicant's responses of which are evaluated below:

a(i and ii) understanding links of learning to future goals: the plan calls for close ties across curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the new standards. The standards are in turn closely linked to students' long-term future success (both college and career). The challenge is that saying these are linked -- at least from the perspective of adults -- is different from ensuring that students can make those leaps in connectivity. Not enough detail is offered to ensure that smoothness of connectivity.

a(iii) deep learning: the technical tools (tablets), with skillful guidance from teachers, will almost by default encourage students to pursue topics and learning in deeper ways. In addition, the plan calls for personalized reading, writing, and speaking/listening activities to promote students' deeper understanding of the ideas they are exploring.

a(iv) diversity: district professional development is targeted to be responsive to the 85 first languages and 45 percent of the student population whose native language is other than English. This should translate well to exploring diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives.

a(v) skills beyond math and English: this plan calls for a dramatic shift in the role of the teacher from being a knowledge provider to one of facilitation and mentoring. If done effectively (that is a big if), this will greatly promote the prospects of students moving from regurgitators of facts to becoming critical thinkers and problem solvers.

b(1) access to personalized content - the nature of the tools in this innovation (tablets for every student in the project) by

definition provides access to content 24/7 and the plans to make sure students are directed to the right "stuff" in a limitless cyberspace reality makes it more likely that the content will be of quality. The district labels this a "high leveraged" strategy to provide access to personalized content. This reviewer agrees.

b(ii) variety of instructional approaches: teachers will be trained on how to incorporate a range of strategies (see section C2) and their performance will be monitored and rewarded by the new evaluation system. Much of the content for this initiative will involve collaborative, project-based work -- a healthy antidote to more typical middle school instruction.

b(iii) high quality content: the plan puts front and center the idea that most of what will happen, both in the classroom and at home (or wherever students use their tablets), will be tied to newly developed common core state standards. These presumably will set a high bar. In addition, a tiered system of instruction and intervention, if implemented well, will ensure that target resources get directed to the students most in need of them.

b(iv) ongoing feedback: the plan calls for the use of regular online assessments with real-time reporting and a system of feedback that includes an assessment of learning (summative), assessment for learning (formative and diagnostic), and assessments as learning (critical self reflections). These have the potential to dramatically change the picture of school assessments in a positive way. The unknown is how well those can be implemented and replace long-standing, more traditional modes of assessment as the normative way that business is done in these schools.

b(v) accommodations: the plan describes new technologies (e.g., text-to-speech readers and voice-to-text software) that can better accommodate the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners. Also, the tiered system of support should put resources in the hands of students who need special accommodations.

(c) student training and support: The Boston365 plan offers a very detailed plan in Appendix 17 that outlines the goals, activities, and responsible parties for a range of topics that address student training and support. These are all comprehensive and sensible.

The depth of the total response to this section warrants a high range score of 18.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This plan makes clear that central to the success of this initiative is the proper investment in the human capital of staff who will be guiding students in their blended learning experiences. While nearly 40% of the budget will be allocated to technology investments that will enable students to engage in learning 24/7 (through investment in tablets) the bulk of the remaining portion of the budget (developing educator effectiveness (23%), investing in supports to ensure successful implementation (20%), and helping teachers use assessments to inform learning (4%) means that almost half of the total budget (47%) will be spent on that human capital component. This part of the plan outlines eleven strategies that will enable this to happen:

(1) professional learning - much of that will be done with online tools supported by coaches. This also includes a component for principals. What appears to be missing from this is any opportunities for teachers and leaders to process and reflect on what they have been learning (e.g. professional learning communities to make meaning from those professional development experiences).

(2) instructional coaching - the schools will have access to coaches on a 6 to 8 week cycle to guide and assist them. The coaches will focus on effective instructional practices and how to apply those to state standards. Left unsaid is how the lessons from those many individual school contacts might inform a larger improvement process as it applies to the initiative.

(3) school-based teacher leaders - these leaders will be on the front line, working with their colleagues at each school. This appears to be a turnkey approach with these leaders working directly with coaches.

(4) professional teams and communities to support implementation - a network of leaders from the central office will form a centralized online Professional Learning Network. In addition, there will be additional networks to both help those teachers who are excelling as leaders and those who might need additional assistance.

(5) improving practice through feedback from evaluation systems - school and district leaders will use the district's Effective Educator Rubric with four standards (see Appendix 25) to provide a feedback loop about progress and help identify best practices.

(6) online clearinghouse of tools and resources - there is a overload of information available to both students and educators on the web. This clearinghouse will serve as a resource for sorting the wheat from the chaff, what the proposal calls "quality

pieces." This is a critical component to a constructive student experience with new technology.

(7) using tools, data and resources for accelerating student progress - if teachers are to shift from just delivering content in traditional ways to guiding the work of students, as outlined in a blended learning environment, then that role will only be as good as the data and resources teachers have to make informed decisions about both their work and the work students are doing. This strategy puts one of the four key assurance areas as identified by RTT-D -- having and using data to make good decisions - front and center.

(8) processes and tools to match student needs - this strategy outlines a six-step approach for schools to follow in putting their plans into place. This provides flexibility but also broad guidance for what is valued by program developers.

(9) training, policies, tools, data, and resources for leaders - the proposal provides less information about the role and support for school leaders than it does for teachers. This strategy puts that role front and center. The strategy will employ not only the resources developed from RTTT state plans for a new evaluation system, but also a range of professional development opportunities for leaders in venturing into this new domain of technology as a central learning tool. For example, the district will adapt two already in-place summer School Leadership Institutes to help school leaders.

(10) increasing the number of students receiving instruction from highly effective teachers - a new teacher contract that was ratified last month provides more flexibility in in rewarding and keeping teachers who are labeled as highly effective. This strategy directly addresses the vision of quality teaching by creating more incentives to reward those teachers.

(11) blending learning to expand access to effective teachers - the new technology has the potential to provide students access to teachers beyond their regular classroom assigned instructor. So students can learn new content and explore ideas, concepts, and issues not just with one teacher but via online tools to gain access to the best teachers within the district and across the country.

All these strategies add up to a high range score of 18.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The RTT-D application called for responding to five sub-criteria in this section. Each is discussed below:

(a) a central office organizational structure that provides support and services to Boston365 schools: There are four parts to the support piece that make this assurance a strong one. First, there is already a climate of reform supported by the district. Second, there are 50 IT specialists in the Office of Information and Instructional Technology to assist with this initiative. Third, there are central office teams with the skills and the responsibility to both monitor and support implementation in the buildings. And, fourth, there is a whole new organizational group (with at least 9 staff) that are proposed to have primary responsibility for ensuring fidelity of plan implementation.

(b) school leadership teams with flexibility and autonomy: The Boston365 plan outlines four types of schools that are eligible for grant funds (traditional, pilot, innovation, and charter). There is an effective chart in the text that summarizes the levels of autonomy across these four types for a range of autonomy issues (e.g., budget, curriculum, staffing, etc.). There is clear evidence that schools will be given the needed autonomy. This is further reinforced by a recent state waiver from NCLB regulations giving the district's schools more flexibility in the indicators of student achievement they want to be held accountable for.

(c) promotion based on mastery rather than seat time: The proposal states that course credit will be based on mastery. An example is then offered of two schools developing units based on the common core state standards. While that example makes clear that mastery is the goal and that differentiation is essential to achieve that goal, it leaves unanswered whether students can progress at different paces.

(d) mastery at multiple times and in multiple ways: The plan offers an example of one school with project-based learning whereby units will be designed around 5 to 6 week cycles. There is also a district expectation that each student will take at least three formative assessments each year. Finally, there is a general promise that mastery will be assessed at multiple times and in multiple ways. This was reinforced by a case example, Tobin School, that will serve as a model for mastery assessment across the participating schools.

(e) adaptable and accessible resources for all students: The district repeatedly documents throughout the plan how online resources (e.g., e-books that scaffold vocabulary, Bookshare, and text-to-speech applications) will make it easier for students with disabilities and English language learners to adapt and use these resources to enhance their learning. This argument is convincing.

The response to this criterion produced a high range score of 13.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Boston365 plan is fully responsive to the criteria outlined in this part of the proposal.

(a) access to content by all stakeholders: the plan provides details for all students to have access to content through a wireless-ready mobile device (no specific type is detailed in either the plan or the budget); teachers will all have laptops to access content; and parents will all have access to information through a new "family and community engagement portal." The plan calls for the district to work with vendors (e.g., Comcast) to provide low-cost options for equipment and data plans for families.

(b) access to technical support for all stakeholders: the plan outlines the training teachers will receive to both use the various resources (curriculum materials, teaching strategies, etc.) as well as how to use data to help inform their own assessments of their own and student progress; parents will receive training through both the Parent University and Tech Goes Home programs, as well as support from family outreach coordinators; and students will receive most of their technical support from their highly trained teachers. In addition, the district also has a phone-based service desk to help people who are having difficulties with technology.

(c) open data format: the plan provides a detailed chart in the text, as well as a diagram in Appendix 20, that outlines nine current data systems. No information is provided about whether these are open format systems. The plan also outlines a clear vision of a new "Cumulus" system -- a cloud-based open-format system for sharing of data. This promises to put all needed data openly available in one place.

(d) use of interoperable data systems: The goal for this reform is to design an integrated, interoperable digital learning platform. This will be a central hub or dashboard for all data and communication. It will be based on a module system with varying levels of access. The plan offers details of the range of modules that might be available. For parents this will include information like course snapshots (including homework assignments), skills, promotion, graduation, assessment, attendance, and transportation. This single launch pad is made more critical by the fact that the proposed reform in this grant application is so closely tied to more effective use of technology.

Thus, the plan is assigned maximum points.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The scoring guide for this section of the grant application offers a distribution of 15 point across three criteria, regarding progress both during and after funding. The applicant makes the case that the district already has a long and successful track record of having current staff with the necessary skills, but also relationships with outside consultants who can offer a more independent, third party assessment of progress. The first criterion involves the issue of monitoring of progress. The district plans to do that by both using central office staff, as well as hire an external evaluator. In addition to having central office staff with skills in monitoring innovation implementation, the proposal also clearly rests responsibility for this initiative on the shoulders of the chief information officer of the district, as well as a new project director who will be hired and report to the CIO. Detailed plans are spelled out for what the evaluator will do. All of this monitoring is well-documented for the duration of the funding, but no explicit mention is made for any monitoring after the funding cycle has been completed, as the criterion specifies. The second criterion calls for clearly specified measurements. In this section the plan outlines 6 indicators from test scores to teacher technology proficiency to school climate indicators. These are developed in more detail in response to criterion E3. Finally, the criterion calls for a plan for sharing information. A range of activities are proposed in the response ranging from quarterly newsletters home, postings on a special website designed for the program, quarterly reports to the staff, semi-annual reports to the board, and an online repository of practice-oriented strategies.</p>		

With the exception of any plan for monitoring after the grant has been completed, this section of the response was carefully and completely presented. Thus, a score in the high range of 13 was assigned.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application documents in several places a range of ongoing communication and engagement strategies for staff within the district. Those are all thorough and appropriate. Thus, this review will focus more closely on the communication and engagement with external stakeholders -- the community. The applicant makes a clear and convincing case that they have a track record for already engaging the community as part of their larger Acceleration Agenda, of which Boston365 is just one piece. The plan describes seven activities that are already in place (e.g., an online Parent Portal and the training of Family and Students Engagement staff to work more effectively with parents). These activities will continue as part of this grant. But more importantly, the plan articulates a clear theory of family engagement that moves from blaming parents as part of the problem to focusing on strengthening the capacity of the schools to engage parents. This theory is informed by the well-known ideas of such parent engagement experts as Don Davies. Equally important, the plan was developed in collaboration with the district's Office of Family and Student Engagement. Thus, it increases the likelihood that parents might be more actively engaged as part of a comprehensive commitment rather than a stand alone reform initiative. For these reasons, the plan was assigned a maximum of 5 points.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The plan offers details for a range of academic and non-academic indicators. The list includes 12 separate academic indicators from report card grades across four subjects (math, ELA, social studies, and science), to four indicators of summative state achievement test scores (math and ELA proficiency and growth scores), as well as four district predictive formative assessments of performance and growth for math and ELA. The plan also calls for tracking attendance, suspensions, and two social-emotional measures of enthusiasm for learning and feelings of acceptance in school, both of which are 8-item survey scales from a yearly administered climate survey. The district, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University, has also developed an innovative off-track/on-track risk scale by incorporating several of the already mentioned indicators. The advantage of this one measure is that it gives a quick and easy-to-understand assessment of whether students are on track to graduate with their cohort peers. This part of the plan also offers a rationale for each measure (e.g., the 8 questions that cohere conceptually around both of the two social-emotional measures) as well as how the measures, through the district's dashboards, will provide rigorous, timely, and formative information. The only missing piece was the lack of any discussion about how revisions might be made to these measures. Given these strengths, the plan warrants a high score of 4.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Boston365 proposal details four key features of the plan to evaluate effectiveness. The first is a set of quarterly review meetings that have already been instituted with the district's turnaround schools. These meetings are comprised of three parts: data analysis and preparation, the actual meetings on a quarterly basis, and followup. The meetings are designed to address four questions: What is the problem? Why is it occurring? What can be done about it? And what supports are needed to fix it? The second feature is the hiring of an external evaluator. As noted in section E1 specific activities are described for making maximum use of this investment. The third feature is the adoption of Walk Throughs by district administrators. These are already in place for other projects in the district and take advantage of an educator effectiveness rubric (Appendix 25) that assures continuity and consistency in the Walk Throughs. Finally, since the plan involves increased use of technology tools, it is a relatively easy matter to keep track of how frequently those tools are being used by teachers, students, and parents. The details of these four features justify a maximum score of 5 for this criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
The financial plan for this project provides evidence that the district is already committed to a range of activities, through		

multiple funding sources, to promote the common goal of personalizing and extending learning. The budget offers details for a total expenditure of \$34.5M, of which 42 percent (\$14.5M) has already been allocated through Title I, i3 grant, and School Improvement grants. These grants provide convincing evidence of the commitment of the district to this type of reform. The funds will have a direct impact on 5200 middle school students, 300 trained teachers, and 1500 newly engaged families. The text and accompanying financial tables break down the budget into seven projects, but only six of which are proposed to be funded by RTT-D funds (the work on extending learning opportunities is exclusively funded by other grants). The six projects include:

- (1) 39% of the RTT-D budget will be allocated to blended learning with technology. Almost all of the funding for this project will go toward purchase of hardware, software, and data plans for 5200 web-enabled devices (tablets). The figures presented in this section are rounded so may not add exactly to 100%.
- (2) 23% of the budget will be spent on developing educator effectiveness. More than 90% of that amount will be for professional development stipends for 300 teachers who should receive nearly 10 days of training a year (68 hours) to incorporate blended learning with technology in their classrooms, as well as promote learning by students at home.
- (3) 20% of the budget will pay for supporting successful implementation of the model. Most of that amount (70%) will be to invest in central office personnel who will assist the schools in their implementation plans. The remaining 30% will be split equally between an outside evaluator and outside technical assistance consultants.
- (4) 7% of the budget will support the development of a collaborative virtual space. Nearly all of that (86%) s to hire contractors to build, implement and maintain the online portals. The remainder is for e-book supplies.
- (5) 6% of the budget will supplement the existing program (Tech Goes Home) to extend the number of families (n=1500 new ones) through Netbooks, data plans, and training.
- (6) The remaining 4% of the budget will be to build the capacity of of teachers to use assessments more effectively to inform learning. This portion of the budget will support the salaries of three new data coaches who will guide the classroom teachers.

The expenditures all appear reasonable and sufficient with each category of funding clearly delineated and a rationale linked to the criteria in other parts of the application. Consequently, this criterion was awarded the maximum of 10 points.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The Boston365 plan makes the case that the project is sustainable because it focuses on building capacity (with the assumption that teacher turnover will only be 6%) and because as a pilot program it will inform future district budget allocations because of its potential to radically transform student learning. The expectation is that this enthusiasm will spread and remain in place as students move to their high school learning experience. But there is no clear outline for similar commitments to grow this approach at the high school level. Without this, the long-term impacts could be compromised. This reviewer interpreted sustainability in the larger context of Boston365 being a central part of the Acceleration Agenda that hopes to produce high quality graduates. The disconnect between the potential for high quality blended learning experiences of middle school students without any specific plans for carrying that innovative instructional and learning model to the high school level creates the potential for a large dropoff in student engagement and enthusiasm for learning at the next level. There appear to be no institutional plans to deal with this high school dilemma.</p> <p>On the other hand, the plan does highlight a projected budget extension, beyond the grant funding cycle. A budget is detailed that calls for approximately \$3.6M a year, a figure that is about two-thirds of the annual proposed grant budget. This is argued at the same time that the applicant maintains that the program could continue on a cost-neutral basis. One way to tip the balance of that dilemma is to seek additional technology funding from other sources. The district notes the growing support for technology innovation with the notion that being a leader in innovations should position the district well for future funding with sources like the Gates Foundation.</p> <p>Sustainability issues were clearly articulated with the exception of the high school problem so this criterion is given a high range score of 8.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

This section of the application spells out six sub-criteria. Each is assessed below:

(a) coherent and sustainable partnerships: Boston claims to have a comprehensive approach to partnerships. As evidence it suggests that partnerships are a central component of the larger Acceleration Agenda -- the district's reform model. This school year it has partnerships with nearly 200 organizations. The plan calls for each school to create its own Boston365 plan so there are no specifics for how each school will develop partnerships, but the district has a rubric in place for assessing any new partnerships with topics like cultural competency, linguistic competency, comprehensive outreach, and high-impact effects. Each school will received \$160,000/year in seed money to promote these partnerships. The school does acknowledge that while there is an infrastructure in place for this work, their middle schools fall behind the elementary and high schools with developing partnerships.

(b) and (c) approximately 10-population level outcomes and ambitious yet achievable performance measures: the district revisited a range of outcomes that have already been documented elsewhere in the proposal: end of course grades, academic achievement from both summative and formative measures in math and ELA, attendance, suspension, and their specially designed composite on-track indicator. The plan also calls for measuring enthusiasm for learning and feelings of school acceptance -- two non-academic indicators previously detailed in other sections of the plan. This part of the plan also describes a digital literacy proficiency indicator. What is missing from the discussion are any measures of socio-emotional-behavioral health (other than standard measures of attendance and suspensions). Most of these have goals that have been articulated elsewhere which seem ambitious yet achievable. The one goal that does not is the effort to move digital literacy proficiency from 25% to 42% over the course of the grant. There is no description of the actual measure, but on its face, this seems underwhelming to only expect 42% of the students to master some level of digital literacy.

(d) integration of partnerships with education: The district uses an Academic Achievement Framework (AAF) to link socio-emotional-behavioral supports with academic achievement. This approach combines a three-tiered support system with two teacher-based models -- Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports while focusing on academic skills, English language development, and socio-emotional-behavioral development.

(e) use of data to track indicators, improve results, and scale the model: the schools use self-assessment forms (already developed by the district) to both track and improve practice. Since the AAF is already in place across the district, it has the potential to reach everyone. However, there is little discussion of how well that outreach is working, especially with the admission that middle schools are behind other schools in developing and maintaining partnerships.

(f) building staff capacity: the district has an existing tool in place to promote capacity-building. It is described in the plan as Cross Functional Rapid Support Teams which are designed to problem solve, build resolutions for schools, and better link schools to partners.

In addition to these responses, the district also provided a case study of an existing partner, Citizen Schools, which is an after school program that provides academic support, exploration, and career-orientations programs. There is no data provided on the level of current involvement in Boston schools. The larger nationwide efforts of this organization have produced high school graduation rates 20% higher than matched groups of students not participating in this after-school program.

As a collective whole, the answers to the comprehensive preference priority are complete and convincing. This criterion was assigned a high score of 8.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Boston365 plan argues that the both the hook and the hope is that technology will engage and excite students about learning. This can be transformative for students and parents. The same enthusiasm should spread to teachers and leaders. The language throughout the proposal consistently drives home the point that technology is both an integral part of these students' lives and an important tool for them to be lifelong learners and productive adult members of their communities. This idea of blended learning (combining technology with other best teaching practices) is an important way to personalize learning environments. The proposal uses the word "personalize" 160 times in the text of this proposal. Thus, the argument is the use of technology should play a more central part of teaching and learning. This is clearly a plan to do that. It is both intuitive and obvious that students will adopt use of this tool. Indeed, quite by happenstance, this reviewer has just spent the past four

days in a persistently low achieving urban high school where 1000 young adults were just given iPads as a central learning tool. It is a no brainer, when watching the students, to see how quickly and completely they become engaged by this piece of technology. The unanswered question is the degree to which that enthusiasm and excitement will be channeled toward productive learning pursuits. The investments in professional development for teachers and in the creation of online tools described in this proposal dramatically increases an affirmative answer to that hypothetical question. Thus, this proposal receives a positive response to whether the applicant has coherently and comprehensively addressed the absolute priority of personalized learning environments.

Total	210	186
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